

moravian messenger

AUGUST 2024



Introducing Sr Kiran Young Wimberly

The new minister who has received and accepted a Call to serve the Irish District as a part-time Minister from 22nd April 2024.

It's been a few months since I've come on board with the Irish District, and it's been wonderful to get a chance to visit the five churches I'll be working with, to meet people involved in those congregations, and to get a sense of the history and ethos of the Moravian Church in this area.

As an American who has spent 14 years in Northern Ireland and who grew up internationally, I very much appreciate that the Moravian Church is a global denomination, with connections in a variety of cultures and contexts throughout the world. The daughter of Presbyterian (USA) missionaries/teachers, I grew up in Japan and India, so spent my growing-up years and became most familiar with the climates and cultures of Asia. My family was based primarily in Tokyo for the first 20 years of my life, after which they settled in Princeton, New Jersey - the area we now call home in the US. During university, I also spent a year studying and living in Jerusalem.

It was whilst training for ministry at Princeton Seminary that I met my husband Alex, and only a few years after we got married, we received an invitation to ministry within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Alex's family had spent time in Northern Ireland when he was a child, which is how we came upon this connection - so in 2007 we moved to Belfast and began working

in two congregations. During this time, our three children - Eva (15), Amos (13) and Phoebe (11) were born.

After nearly 7 years in Belfast, we decided to return to the US to do further studies and live closer to family, thinking that we would probably settle somewhere there. However, it was not long after we left that we felt a very strong call to return to Ireland in some shape or form. Our hearts had become strongly connected to this place, in ways we didn't quite understand until we had tried moving back to the US for a time.

So in 2017, we had the delightful opportunity to return to Northern Ireland in a different capacity - to serve with the Corrymeela Community for Peace and Reconciliation. Since then, we have been based in the beautiful Ballycastle on the north coast. Alex is now Leader of the Community, and we are both involved in the daily rhythms of the residential centre, particularly through worship leadership. Whilst we have been living here, I have also taken up various pastoral roles in the area.

It has been a gift to discover more about the Moravian Church's ministry and presence in Northern Ireland. I am thankful for the opportunity to learn from the Moravians in Ireland, for the chance to minister in these churches, and for the Moravian presence in this place since its founding. I look forward to walking alongside these congregations, supporting the ministries in existence, and seeing what new things might unfold as well.

Sr Kiran Young Wimberly



**Robert and Bahati Pangani,
servants of God**

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Editorial

July and August are traditionally the holiday months, and I am looking forward to having some time off and taking life a bit slower in August. I'm sure that other ministers will be in the same situation.

It is perhaps good at this time of slower Church life to think about our ministers and what they need from their congregations. I feel a bit awkward writing about this as a serving minister but please bear with me and think about how it feels to be a minister serving a congregation. Ministers do not go into the job for the status, the money, the accommodation or the pension and frequently they move at the 'Call of the Church'. Ministers serve the Church because they feel called and that call has been tested by the Church through its various processes.

As a gardener I always think back to the parable Jesus tells in Matthew 13:1-9. In my Bible it is called the parable of the Sower but I think it would be more accurately called the parable of the soils. The seed is sown but it is dependant on the soil about whether the seed will germinate and grow into a healthy plant. Maybe if the seed does not germinate the fault does not lie entirely with the Sower or minister? Perhaps the soil itself is not healthy, perhaps it is full of stones that block things, perhaps it is hard baked clay where nothing penetrates, perhaps it has many cares and spiritual life is not at the forefront!

As a Bishop I have the privilege to hear some of the hopes and fears of our ministers. Sometimes I get wonderful news

but at other times I hear of exhaustion, of disempowerment and even bullying. It is sad to think that such things can happen and when they do it is a reflection as much on the congregation as it is on the minister. All ministers are fallible human beings with strengths and weaknesses, some are older, and some are younger but all need to feel welcomed, loved and supported. Everyone works better in an atmosphere of care and affirmation and conversely congregations too need to feel that they are appreciated for all that they give.

In the 'good old days' Ministers were expected to put up with difficult behaviour and the phrase was almost 'what doesn't kill you makes you stronger'. But our world has changed, in the secular world we commonly come across anti-harassment statements at ticket booths and in the workplace. These statements say that it is unacceptable to intimidate, humiliate, degrade or bully the employee; in Church contexts bullying can consist of a number of low-grade comments made over time rather than just one big instance. Is it time that the Church adopted some form of 'Dignity at Work' or 'Anti Bullying and Harassment' policy. Perhaps the world is here setting the standard for the Church!

I hope you all have a good and restful August before the rush of September begins.



Sr Sarah Groves
Editorial Team

British Mission Board (BMB) News

Sr Jane Carter, Chair of the BMB, recently attended the meeting of the European Mission Council (EMC) in Christiansfeld, Denmark (21st-23rd May). She joined representatives of the other European Mission agencies to share current news of ongoing work and to offer advice and support for particular situations of concern. Also attending were: Brn Jørgen Bøytler - BDM (Denmark), Raimund Hertzsch - HMM (Germany), Justin Rabbach - BWM (USA), Johannes Klemm - Mission 21 (Switzerland) and Nico van Wageningen - ZZg (Netherlands) and Klas Lindberg - Swedish Mission (Sweden). Each Mission agency brought news of their current commitments in parts of the Unity including Tanzania (various Provinces), Zanzibar, Malawi, South Asia, Uganda, Burundi, Zambia, Latvia, Sweden, Albania, Nicaragua, Latin America (including Brazil and Bolivia) and the Caribbean. There were many areas of mutual interest throughout the Unity.

The subject of fundraising was discussed with several agencies reporting a reduction in donations. Further consideration was given to partnering with aid agencies in specific areas of

interest and some agencies such as Mission 21 and BWM had experiences of significant success in this direction. Legacies were also highlighted as a potential source of income provided the funds were not designated to obscure projects. Fundraising is a subject that the BMB are currently considering with a project-based focus.

The Unity Disaster Relief Fund was also discussed with a view to its development and implementation. It was hoped that the fund could develop a reserve of \$500,000. One benefit would be that a Moravian area would not need to hope they were connected with a mission agency that had a disaster fund at the ready in order to receive support. This would allow for a greater amount of equity across the board.

Star Mountain in the West Bank was discussed in relation to the current situation in neighbouring Gaza and the difficulties of transportation and staffing



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were highlighted as significant problems. There was a reassurance that the care for the young people continued to be maintained at a high level despite the ongoing conflict.

It was generally agreed that more bilateral sharing of ideas, resources and personnel could help all agencies and should not be restricted to annual meetings; this should be on ongoing dialogue.

After sharing very enjoyable times of fellowship over several meals, on our final day we enjoyed a guided tour by Br Jørgen Bøytler of the Christiansfeld Church and God's Acre and the archives. Christiansfeld is a beautiful town and well worth a visit.

What's on in your area for your families and young people

We are endeavouring as PYCC (Provincial Youth and Children's Committee) to collate together regularly the known events and services that are shared to us by the churches across the province of events and services that are deliberately aimed at growing and nurturing our families, children and young people. We hope that by advertising these, people will become more aware of the events in their local areas that they can then share with their families, friends and neighbours and use these as a springboard to invite people to. All of these events are discipling and feeding this younger end of our church family which as a Province we are hoping to see growth and development in.

If you look at it and see that your family/youth event is not advertised please contact Sr Claire Maxwell so she can collate the information for the month of September for you in this space. Her contact details are: claire.maxwell@moravian.org.uk.

Here are the events in AUGUST

Irish District

Wednesday 7th-Friday 9th August - Gracehill Moravian Church is holding a Holiday Bible Club 'Finding Jesus' from 10am-12pm in the Church Hall and Church Grounds. All primary aged children are welcome. To ensure that everyone gets a quality experience we are limiting the numbers to 30 children. It will be a mixture of Bible stories, songs, sport and construction/craft activities. Break time snacks are provided and please wear oldish clothes that will be suitable for indoors and outdoors. To get a booking form please email Sarah at sarah.groves@moravian.org.uk.

Sunday 25th August - the annual Irish District Barbeque will be held at Kilwarlin Moravian Church. The event will start at 2.30pm with games for children of all ages and a tour of the grounds; food will be served at 3.30pm and there will be a short act of worship at 4.30pm. Everyone welcome.

London

Thursday 29th August - Fetter Lane Moravian Church will be holding a Children's Activity Day in Moravian Close from 2pm until 4pm. Cost: no charge. Parents/guardians and grandparents are to stay with the children.

Western District

5th-9th August - Bath Coronation Avenue will be hosting the Girls Brigade Summer Camp.

4th August & 1st September - Brockweir Moravian Church will be hosting Stay and Play sessions for babies and toddlers from 2.30pm until 4.30pm.

11th-16th August - Brockweir Moravian Church will be running a Holiday Club for 4-11 year-olds from 10am until 12pm. The cost will be £2 per session.

Thursday evenings during August - Brockweir Moravian Church will be hosting a Pizza & Pop session for 11-14 year-olds from 6.30pm until 8.00pm.

(For more information about the Holiday Club or Pizza & Pop session at Brockweir please contact Sian Vanloo on 07498 232485 or Sue Groves on 07803 745913 or by email at: sue.groves@moravian.org.uk.)

3rd August - East Tytherton Moravian Church are hosting a family friendly Cream Tea 2pm-4pm.

Yorkshire District

Saturday 3rd August - Horton Moravian Church Coffee Morning with Under 5's Play Provision will be held 10am-12pm. £2.50 for tea and cakes. Parents/guardians and grandparents are to stay with children.

British Mission Board

The Mission and Society Committee have recent encouraged a series of articles about the various Provincial Committees on the lead up to Synod to inform and encourage people to consider applying for available posts on those Committees.

For information the British Mission Board (BMB) is a slightly different body. It is not a Provincial Committee in that it is an extension of the Provincial Board of the British Province (otherwise known as the PEC). There are no elections at Synod and no formal nominations. Most of the BMB is made up of members of the PEC and they have the option to co-opt

additional members based on their skills and wider interest in the Unity or the specific countries that the BMB supports.

This format is because most of the funding for the BMB comes from dedicated trusts and legacies which are managed by the PEC as trustees.

Current members: Sr Jane Carter, Sr Roberta Hoey, Br David Howarth, Br Joachim Kreusel, Sr Claire Summers and Br Livingstone Thompson.

Until recently the Provincial Board/BMB has acted as the guiding authority in the absence of a local Provincial Board in the

area of South Asia. Since January, at their first Synod, they have now elected a Provincial Board and this role will take on a new direction. The BMB will remain in support and partnership with South Asia and Tanzania, Western Province.

I was co-opted onto the BMB in 2021 and since that time Dr Claire Summers has also been co-opted. It is by coincidence that I now serve on the Provincial Board and have retained my role within the BMB.

Sr Jane Carter
Chair, BMB

Robert and Bahati Pangani, servants of God



© Br Joachim Kreusel

It was in 2001 when the first world-wide Moravian Mission Conference took place in Herrnhut. After the conference delegates spent some time in congregations across Europe, and some visited Hornsey Moravian Church. Amongst them were some brothers from Tanzania. When leaving one of them asked Sr Susan Foreman for her address.

Some time later a letter arrived which Susan shared with the Church Committee. The sender was Br Robert Pangani who was expressing his wish to become a Moravian minister. As the Moravian Church in Tanzania is growing fast there is a real need for more ministers. However, only a very limited number of applicants can be accepted because of the limited resources of the church. So, Robert's chances of being accepted were slim as he had moved from the Rukwa Province to the South Western Province of Tanzania.

When Robert's friend came back from his trip to Europe with Susan's address in his luggage, Robert could see a tiny light on the horizon, hoping that this distant congregation in London would respond to his letter favourably and help him, maybe even with studying in England.

Hornsey church committee discussed Robert's letter and came to the conclusion that studying in England would be far too expensive and therefore not feasible. It is not hard to imagine that Robert must have felt downhearted when he received Hornsey's response. But he didn't give up. He wrote again and an extensive correspondence followed; real letters in those days. Robert was never pushy, and he was always understanding and kind. The church committee could see his seriousness and commitment, and eventually came to the decision to support Robert if he would study at the Teofilo Kisanji University in Mbeya. This meant raising over £9,000 in a year period. Fundraising events like a comedy night were organised, 'begging letters' sent out to potential donors etc. And the miracle happened: the money got raised each year.

On 30th November 2002 we received an email from a Danish lecturer of the Teofilo Kisanji University:

To Hornsey Moravian Church:

'I just want to tell that I have received your E-mail. And that Robert Pangani already has received it. And I don't think I need to say that your answer made him very glad. He was almost unable to talk. He almost cried of joy. He asked me to greet and thank you most heartily. We also want to thank you for your very quick response. He told me that yesterday was a very tough day for him. He thought a lot about this case. Now he is glad and free. And free to go back to his village today.

Let me also say that I really think that this opportunity can be a blessing to him and to the church. We know him as a very serious person, Christian and student. He likes to work with his studies and even more practical things. And he has the capacity.

At the same time, he seems humble and to have heart for other people. And another important matter is that he is brave. He is able to stand alone against the bad impulses that now and then arise among students. Yes, we like him very much and see something special. I think that this can lead to blessings. So we pray.'

Robert kept regularly in touch with the Hornsey congregation and made excellent progress.

The day of his graduation came in 2006 and we at Hornsey received an invitation. The church committee suggested that I should go. On my way to Mbeya, I stopped over in Dar Es Salaam in order to meet friends. A 12-hour bus journey followed and took me to Mbeya. At this time Robert was on placement in a small village near the Zambian boarder, called Nkangamo. The chairman of the Province, Br Sadoki Simwanza, and some other people took me to this place, and we arrived in the early afternoon. People knew that we were coming, but they didn't know what time. So, they were waiting in the church from morning - praying and singing. Robert was leading the gathering. What a joy it was when we met in this church for the first time in person! We spent some time together in worship, and then I was given the choice of either travelling to Mbozi and visit the hospital run by the Moravian Church or staying in Nkangamo and doing house visits. I decided for the latter, and Robert and I went from house to house all afternoon, visiting people, sharing

their stories and praying. It was an unforgettable experience as it gave me the opportunity to understand the life in this community somewhat better. In the evening of the same day, we travelled together back to Mbeya where the graduation ceremony would be two days later. What a celebration it was! A service with many choirs singing, with preaching and of course the handing out of the certificates and awards. Robert was sitting next to a young lady who later became his wife, Bahati.

A German tutor teaching at the university told me that Robert was his best student. Br Simwanza and others expressed their gratitude for sponsoring Robert as more ministers are needed, but finances restrict the numbers of those undergoing training.

After I returned to the UK we kept in touch. The Hornsey congregation was very pleased to hear how well all this worked out. All the fundraising efforts paid off, and the congregation was so good at it, and they did it with all their heart.

We learned about the wedding of Robert and Bahati, and we were very happy for them. Over the course of the following years three children were born.

Fast forward to 2017: my daughter Tamara and I decided to spend two weeks in Tanzania on holiday. We made a point of visiting Robert and his family. It was then when we learnt more about the background story.

When Robert sent his first letter to Hornsey, he was in a desperate situation. He lived on buying and selling fish, transporting fish on a donkey or on a bicycle, and travelling so for two days. But the income was so little that it was almost impossible to survive on this business. He and seven of his friends decided to go to South Africa in order to work in a Goldmine. They didn't tell their families as they would not have allowed them to go.

When travelling in a minibus they got involved in a horrendous accident on the border from Tanzania to Zambia. Many people died or got injured. Robert was one of the survivors.

After recovering from his injuries, he joined Mlimani Bible school in the Rukwa Province. He then wrote the letter to Hornsey.

In 2017 Robert was already the chairman of the Mbalizi district with over 48 congregations! He travelled extensively on his motorbike in order to visit remote congregations, often coming home late in the evening when local people were still waiting for him wanting to speak to him.

We also learnt about Bahati's life. She grew up in a remote area of the village called Chembe in malangali ward, and became an orphan when she was very young. Her grandfather took care of her, but he died when she was a teenager. She was on her own, growing some vegetable during school holidays, selling them in the market and earning just enough money for buying the school uniform and soap. Later the minister of the church recognised her many gifts, and suggested that she should attend a bible school. He would raise the funds for the fees. She walked together with her cousin for two days in order to put the application in. When they arrived at the bible school they were told to come back in the following week as the principle was away. So they did. Bahati was accepted and successfully finished

the bible school, and again, recognising her gifts and abilities, she was encouraged to study theology.

A sponsor was found: the Southern Province sponsored her theological studies at certificate level. Mission 21, a Mission organisation based in Switzerland, sponsored her bachelor of Divinity in Limuru, Kenya. Robert and Bahati were studying together; this is how they met.

At the time of our visit Bahati was leading the work with orphans in the Province. She took Tamara and myself to the nearby orphanage and we did home visits together - a deeply moving experience.

Let's go back in time again, to May 2007. A conference of the Moravian Church with participants from Tanzania and different Mission partners took place in London. Some participants visited Hornsey Moravian Church for the Sunday service. Among them were Br Sadoki Simwanza (Tanzania) and Br Volker Schulz (Switzerland). Having met Br Simwanza in Tanzania, we talked in a casual way about Robert's progress. It was then when we realised that Volker and I had something in common: Volker was involved with Mission 21 supporting Bahati and I as the minister of Hornsey Moravian Church was involved with supporting Robert. A beautiful discovery!

Later on, Robert was interested in further studies. As the Hornsey congregation felt we had come to our limit with fundraising, we liaised with Mission 21 through Volker, and they were able to help him with further studies.

In 2022/2023 I heard from different sources that Robert would be a likely candidate for becoming a bishop. When I checked with him, he downplayed it.

When we met again in September 2023 at Unity Synod (the synod of the world-wide Moravian Church) in Cape Town (by then Robert was the chairman of the Province, and he attended as such at Unity Synod) he shared with me that his name indeed had been put forward as a bishop candidate. But again, he said it's all open. This is Robert in his very humble way!

Soon after the Unity Synod the fourth child of Bahati and Robert was born, what a joy.

The Province called a special synod with about 400 delegates on 2nd November 2023. Only one item was on the agenda: the election of a bishop. Robert got 317 votes in the first round of the election! No further round was necessary in order to achieve the 2/3 majority. He contacted me on the same evening. I think he found it daunting, but I know he is the right person for this office: an excellent combination of being able, wise and humble.

The consecration of Robert Pangani as a bishop of the world-wide Moravian Church will be on Sunday 2nd June 2024 in Mbeya. I am grateful that Volker and I can be part of this.

We thank God for Robert and Bahati and their family, and pray that God may continue to bless them.

Br Joachim Kreusel
Bishop of the Unity



'Dare to be One' - an Ecumenical Meeting of Bishops

Dare to be One was the title of an Ecumenical Meeting of Bishops that was held in Augsburg, Germany in the spring of this year. The subtitle was 'A Call From Jesus to Live the Future Now'.

The meeting was organised by the Focolare, a lay Christian organisation inspired by Jesus' prayer to the Father 'May they all be one' (John 17:21). Focolare was originally a lay Catholic movement but members now come from many different Churches.

The idea of bringing together Bishops from different Churches began in 1982 and 2024 was the 40th such meeting with 59 Bishops from 26 different countries and 30 Churches. These ranged from Orthodox Churches from places such as Tigray, Greece, Lutheran Churches from Germany and Scandinavia, Anglican Churches from places as diverse as Pakistan, Ireland and Madagascar, Methodist Churches and Catholic Churches from many countries. I was the only Moravian bishop and there were only two women, the other was a German Lutheran bishop. It was a truly international and ecumenical gathering, and I was so honoured to have been invited to take part in it.

The venue of Augsburg was chosen because of its importance in reformation history as the place where the Lutheran Confession of Faith, the Augsburg Confession, was presented in 1530. In addition, it was the place where the historic joint declaration on Justification by Faith was signed between the Catholic and Lutheran Churches was signed 25 years ago.

The meeting was held at the Catholic hotel/conference centre, Haus Sankt Ulrich and as there were so many different nationalities at the meeting a major work of translation was required. We were all equipped with headphones and sessions were translated into English, Italian and German.

Sessions began with warm welcomes to Augsburg by the Bishop Bertram, the Catholic Bishop of Augsburg and by Bishop Brendan

Leahy, the Catholic Bishop of Limerick. We were told that the aim of the Bishop meetings is not to overcome differences, solve theological problems or to all become the same, but rather to model how to live in love and to bear each other's pain. Then the introductions began ... so many people to get to know and so many perspectives to take on board.

The informal moments and discussion groups were a wonderful opportunity to hear about each other's life and work and the issues that each one faced. These issues varied from what to do when Churches differed on issues around sexuality or living as a minority Church, very movingly the struggles of Christians in Pakistan and tragically the situation facing the orthodox Christians in Tigray. It was humbling to hear these stories and of the efforts made and the pain faced that the bishops bore on behalf of their people. I will take these stories with me for years and pray for the people I heard from.

Each day we heard from different speakers, some were deeply spiritual and others deeply theological although that of course is a false divide as spirituality and theology are intimately connected in a life of faith. We heard again that the Church is Christ himself who has taken form among us and that the Church should be a sacrament of the kingdom, a sign and a symbol. A powerful image was that of Christ crucified and forsaken in the various sides of our theological differences. We were called to be the first to love and to see Jesus in others and reminded that Jesus said, 'love one another as I have loved you'.

Some speakers spoke of the situations in their own countries: Archbishop John McDowell, the Primate of Ireland spoke of his dialogue with political parties, and Bishop Charles May spoke about the Church in South Africa after Apartheid and how they are still looking for a reconciled and peaceful society. Rev Callan Slipper, who is a member of Focolare spoke about Receptive Ecumenism and how ecumenism has immense dignity as it

seeks to repair broken relationships. He gave us one really concrete example of this in the Catholic Churches review of synodality where they are looking at the experiences of other Churches and seeking to find from that a model for the Church.

We heard from a number of folk from Focolare including Margaret Karram, the President of the movement. Other speakers included a Methodist Bishop from Brazil and a very moving film from the Catholic Bishop of Jerusalem who spoke on the problem of religious extremism in the Holy Land, Judaism, Islam and Christian Zionism. He said that although only 1% of the population were Christians they had about 30% of the influence because of their ministries of prayer, education, healing and social work. A number of speakers spoke on the theme of 'Christ forsaken' and this resonated deeply with me. Some want an all-powerful God and a theology of glory rather than a theology of the cross and abandonment. One speaker said that in times of anxiety people look for strong leaders and this is extended to God; they want a strong God who is a hero and who does what we want him to do but God hides himself in the suffering!

Thankfully it was not all lectures and debate. We were taken to Augsburg Town Hall to see the famous Golden Hall and to a reception with the city's mayor. We also went to visit the Fuggerei which is the world's oldest surviving public housing complex. This was founded in 1516 by Jakob Fugger and was built for the poor of the city where they could recover and start working again. It has grown over the years, but its purpose is still the same and the rent is the same as it was in 1516!!

The last day of the conference took us to a Focolare community where supper was laid on and we shared in an evening of simple but effective entertainment. The evening ended with a special service in the community chapel where the bishops signed a pact of mutual love and respect for each other.

The worship of the meeting was superb - in the mornings informal worship in the conference hall before the talks began and in the evening worship in the hotel chapel, Holy Communion from the Church of Ireland, Catholic Mass, and Orthodox worship. We also shared in worship in St Ulrich's Cathedral with the most wonderful organ and a lunch time service in the shared Lutheran and Catholic Church of St Anna where the Declaration on Justification by Faith was signed 25 years ago.

The organisation was wonderful and all of us who attended the conference owe a huge amount to those who collected us and delivered us back to the airport, who translated for us and generally looked after us. This includes the organising committee and the willing Focolare volunteers.

It was a great experience but also challenging on many levels. The call to be the first to love is not easy and the work of building bridges particularly with those who do not accept the validity of your ministry is hard, but we have received grace and we are called to show it! I learnt much and I hope I remember something of it in the years to come.

Sr Sarah Groves

Minister of Gracehill Moravian Church



A Missionary Marriage in the Nineteenth Century by Lot in the Moravian Church

I mentioned in my previous article that the lot was used to ascertain the will of Christ, the Chief Elder of the Moravian Church, as to whether a couple were suited to marriage.

The system varied over time. In the earlier years the Church Elders played a more significant role. They decided when a Brother or Sister was ready for marriage, sometimes suggesting who should marry whom, but there do not appear to have been any forced marriages and the couples were given the final decision. In all cases the agreement of Christ, as Chief Elder, was sought through the lot.

By the mid-19th century only marriages of missionaries and ministers were put to the lot, presumably because wives played an important part in carrying out the husband's religious duties and there were strong expectations as to what a suitable wife would be.

The minutes of the Provincial Elders Conference for 1840 give an interesting example of how marriage by lot applied at that time in the British Province.

William Humberstone was born in Bristol in 1815. At the age of 19 he took up a teaching post at Fulneck Boys' School and two years later was sent to Barbados as a missionary. Four years later, at the age of 25, he decided he was ready for marriage.

The PEC Minutes read, 'Mr Humberstone has commissioned through Brother Ellis his wish that a Sister may be found willing to share the labour with him who is good tempered, of good sense, education, not more than 27 years old, not sickly nor very ill-looking or deformed'.

Humberstone provided a list of names as follows. These, one presumes, are all women he already knew.

- 1 Mary Heiland Soenichsen of Fulneck
- 2 Jane Maud of Ockbrook
- 3 Ann Thomas, Bristol
- 4 Mary Morris, Keighley
- 5 erased
- 6 Eliza Spense, Ockbrook
- 7 Emma Osborn, Fulneck
- 8 Ann Hinchliffe, Mirfield (the younger of the two sister)
- 9 erased
- 10 Isabella Binns, daughter of Mr William Binns, Dublin'.

The erasures appear to have come from Humberstone himself. Perhaps he had second thoughts, or he was informed after compiling the list that the persons named were already accounted for. As we will see, this list was, in effect, a proposal of marriage to eight women in reducing order of choice.

The PEC's procedure was then as follows. It was the practice of Ministers or Elders to write a testimonial for Single Sisters which

was kept by the PEC. The testimonial gave an outline of personality and whether the woman was considered marriageable. Beginning with the first name on the list the PEC looked at each of these testimonials. If a testimonial had not been received one was requested. Each sister the PEC considered suitable as a wife was then put to the lot. The question for the lot was whether the First Elder approved that steps be taken that Br William Humberstone of Barbados marry the Single Sister X of Y.

If the Saviour approved, then the Single Sister was asked if she wished to marry the missionary in question and informed that the Saviour had agreed. The sister was, of course, free to refuse. If the sister agreed to the marriage she was sent out to the missionary if he was then abroad, and the wedding took place at the mission station.

William Humberstone's request developed as follows. The first name on the list, Mary Hyland Soenichsen of Wyke Congregation, was put to the lot but the response was negative.

A testimonial was requested for Sr Jane Maud of Ockbrook which was duly received. It stated that she was suitable in health of body and spiritually of mind to become the wife of a missionary and would devote herself to the work. Jane's name was also put to the lot, but the response was negative.

The Saviour did not approve of the third candidate, Ann Thomas of Bristol, either but interestingly the Minutes give us the content of her testimonial. It tells us that she was born in Bristol in 1814, baptised when a girl and afterwards received into the congregation. Her father was a tailor and she had no property. She is, we are told, 'of middling stature, has no bodily defects, good health, but not very gentle, talkative, active, persevering, not hard-hearted, untried by adversity, a little self-complacent, condescending and kind, much valued by her sisters and skilful in needlework and not given to dress'.

I think 'gentle' means 'genteel', 'condescending' could be used at that time without its current unfavourable connotations but implies not standing on one's dignity. 'Not given to dress' means, I assume, not vainly attracted to clothes.

The fourth name, Mary Morris of Keighley, was next put to the lot but the response was again negative.

As the fifth name had been erased it was

now the turn of Eliza Spence of Ockbrook. But Eliza was not as yet a member of the Moravian Congregation and her name had to be passed over. The same applied to the seventh candidate, Emma Osborn of Fulneck.

Ann Hinchcliffe of Mirfield was number eight. We are told that Ann was born in 1817 at Wellhouse. She and her sisters are described as consistent and usefully active members of the congregation. Her health was good, although she occasionally had spasmodic attacks in the stomach. At the time she was a teacher in the Sunday School, a task for which she was considered fully fitted, and considered a truly awakened character and very suitable for missionary work. Unfortunately, when her name was put to the lot the Saviour did not approve.

The ninth name had been erased which left only Isabella Binns. Enquiries showed, however, that she was not a received member of the Church and so not available for marriage to a missionary.

The seventh suggestion, Emma Osborn, who had previously been passed over, had now become a member of the congregation and could therefore be put to the lot. At first the Minister refused to send in a testimonial because he objected to her being thought of as wife of William Humberstone. She was, he said, useful to his church and had, moreover, never expressed a wish for missionary service. He later relented and sent one in. This time the lot was favourable and the Saviour agreed that steps could be taken to arrange the marriage. Humberstone's proposal was first put to Emma. She declined the offer.

Humberstone's ten favourites were now exhausted but a further name, that of Mary Baker of Fairfield, was put to the lot in December of 1840. There is no information in the Minutes as to who put her name forward, whether it was Humberstone himself or the PEC but the Saviour approved of the match. The Minutes tell us that in March of 1841 'Sister Mary Baker has found freedom to accept Br Humberstone's proposal of marriage'. We can assume that in the interval Humberstone was told of the result of the lot and they corresponded with each other which may account for the delay in her acceptance. It is more than possible that the two had never met before she arrived in Barbados for the wedding. There were certainly instances where couples were unacquainted with each other before the bride was sent out

to the mission station. In 1859 three German missionaries in the Himalayas, August Heyde, Heinrich Jaeschke and Eduard Pagel received, in a package as it were, three brides after accepting the decisions of the Elders in Herrnhut and Christ, the Chief Elder.

Mary travelled to Barbados and she and Humberstone were married on 8th July 1842. Shortly after the marriage Humberstone writes in his report to the PEC, 'In my dear wife, the Lord has given me a most affectionate companion, and a devoted helpmate in missionary labour'. A daughter was born the following year and a son in 1863.

Humberstone was back in England by 1849, served as a minister in several congregations, retired from ill health in 1866 and died at the age of 74 in 1889. Mary died in 1878.

It is not entirely clear why the lot was eventually abandoned for ministers' and missionaries' marriages. Perhaps it came to be seen as increasingly anachronistic and isolating the Moravian Church from other denominations. Perhaps it was seen as too controlling in an age of increasing personal freedom. Or perhaps it is related to a change in the nature of religious belief. Towards the end of the 19th century Christianity came to be seen, at least in Europe, more as a matter of personal faith rather than a rational acceptance of unquestionable historical events. This surely affected how the person of Jesus was seen. I do not think, for example, that a chair would now be reserved for the Chief Elder at Board Meetings.

Alternatively, one might ask why the lot was used so frequently in the first place. It has been suggested that the only purpose was to shift the ultimate responsibility for decision making to the Chief Elder. For example, if there was true belief in the reliability of the lot, why were testimonials necessary in the first place for the Board to consider the suitability of the Single Sister for marriage? The name could have been put immediately to the lot since the Chief Elder was omniscient and would have had no need for an initial sift.

The use of the lot may seem alien to us today but, of course, understanding the past wholly from our current perspective is a precarious exercise.

Adrian Wilsdon

With thanks to Lorraine Parsons, Moravian Archivist.

'What I Believe'

Sr Sarah Groves interviews
Br Robert Hopcroft

Br Hopcroft has had a rich and varied ministry in the Moravian Church including on the Provincial Board, Moravian Church Foundation and Unity Board.

Tell us about your background, early years, and family

I was born in Pelsall, a village near to Walsall in Staffordshire, so I am a 'Black Country Lad' and not a 'Brummie', although it is now officially the West Midlands. I have a younger brother and sister, both of whom haven't strayed too far from where we grew up.

How and when did you come to faith?

My mum was a practising Anglican, and I was baptised in the local Parish Church, but then attended the local Methodist Sunday School as it was closer. Like many boys I stopped attending in my teens. I met Wendy when I left home to go to college in Northumberland, and she introduced me to the Moravian Church. After a period of time, I was confirmed at Ockbrook Moravian Church by her father, Rev Ivor Packer. It was during this time that I began to understand the importance of faith and how much it had come to mean to me.

What led you into the ministry, and how did you hear God's call?

It was while Wendy and I were teaching in Labrador that I think it all began. Living and working in a completely different environment and culture and running a school, I began to feel the wonder of God's creation and recognising how important my faith had come to mean. I absolutely loved teaching but felt there was something missing. Two Bible passages kept occurring that spoke out. The first was Psalm 139: 'O Lord, you have searched me and known me' and the second was Romans 10:14-17: 'How are they to believe without someone to proclaim Him?' I wrestled with an uneasy feeling and eventually went to speak to Rev David Dickinson, who was minister of Happy Valley Moravian Church and he patiently listened to my confusions. He encouraged me to apply for Ministry, which I did, and the Provincial Board accepted me as a candidate, then in their wisdom sent me to study at the Moravian Seminary in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. On returning to England, I completed my studies at Northern College with a call to serve Wellhouse Moravian Church: the beginning of 40 years in Ministry.

What has been your greatest joy and your greatest challenge in ministry?

One of my greatest joys has been meeting Wendy who has been my rock. She married a teacher and ended up married to a minister. She has endured multiple calls and the upheaval of moving house and family. She resigned from teaching posts and gave up her career to accommodate my call to serve the church. My greatest challenge has always been feeling good enough to serve.

Tell us something about your work on the Provincial Board

Some of the most demanding years of my ministry were the years on the Provincial Board. The demands were and still are huge and complex. Most congregation members don't understand all that is required, and why should they? It was at times overwhelming and yet rewarding. Although I had seen myself as a teacher and not an administrator, I still felt that this was part of God's call for me. It was also a privilege to be elected as Chairman of the Unity Board for a four-year term and to be able to represent the World Wide Unity.

Have you ever been angry with God, and if so, why?

I don't think I have ever been angry with God but there have been times when I have been very frustrated when trying to understand God's plan for me and my ministry.

Are you afraid to die, or can you look beyond death? Do you believe in a resurrection, and if so, what will it be like?

I am not afraid to die only of the process of aging and dying. None of us know how or when but having sat with people on their

death bed on numerous occasions, I am more and more convinced of a life beyond this earthly one and of the resurrection. I cannot describe what it will be like but hopefully God has got it sorted out.

What can we learn from other Churches and other faiths?

While we have our own wonderful Church history we should embrace the work of other denominations and, having travelled extensively across the Unity we ought to learn more about how the other major faiths view God.

Why are people turning their back on organised religion?

I think it is the institution of the church which puts people off organised religion. The rules and regulations. I believe there are many seeking answers to life, death and spirituality but don't see the church providing the answers.

Some personal preferences - favourite film, book, music and why?

I'm not a great film buff but I am an avid reader of crime novels to relax but two books which have left lasting impressions are 'Papillon' by Henri Charrierre and 'Exodus' by Leon Uris. I really enjoy music and singing in a choir. I am blessed to wake up each morning whistling an arbitrary tune, much to Wendy's annoyance.

The place where you feel closest to God?

Like many others I feel close to God in nature, in the garden, out walking, especially near the coast and sitting with my Church family at Church.

What inscription on your gravestone or epitaph, if any?

If I were to have an epitaph I think it might read: 'I could have done more'.



Hornsey, London

We have had another busy few months here at Hornsey. To mark Easter, Churches Together in Hornsey held an Easter-themed children's activity afternoon at Campsbourne Baptist Church. Br Michael was there helping with the craft activity, which was enjoyed by fifteen children and Michael, of course.

Our monthly Lego Club is still being enjoyed by all who come along and join us, and it is always clear to see that the parents enjoy building with the Lego as much as the children. We have now finished for the summer and look forward to restarting in September, with even more Lego.

May began with a special memorial service held in church for Br John Matthias on the 16th anniversary since he passed away. The service was led by Br Michael with hymns and readings chosen by Sr Debbie to mark this occasion. Many of the congregation were there and the service was followed by refreshments in the hall.

The Hornsey Churches got together again in May for Pentecost. Thankfully the weather stayed dry for us, which was much appreciated by everyone, seeing as the picnic and service were held outdoors at St Mary's Tower. The last thing we wanted was to be 'Singing in the rain'!

Our weekly Bible Study group has joined with the Fetter Lane group and are currently continuing with the Holy Habits Bible study book. If anyone is interested in attending the Bible study, please speak to Br Michael who can provide you with the Zoom details.

Over the past few months, on the Sundays when Br Michael has been preaching at Fetter Lane, we have enjoyed services being led by Sr Sonia Pessoa and Sr Patricia White, Br Edwin Quidan and most recently, Br Alfonso Peters. Thank you to you all for leading our services on these occasions.

As a congregation, we would like to thank Sr Susan Quidan-Foreman for her ministry alongside Br Michael here at



© Sr Claire Newman



© Sr Eleanor Foreman

Hornsey over the past eighteen months. Sr Susan is, of course, no stranger to the congregation and it was a joy to have her leading our services twice a month. Sr Susan was always joyful and uplifting and made sure she got us all on our feet and joining in with any actions alongside the hymns. We had a farewell lunch for her on Sunday 12th May along with a presentation of gifts and a card from us all. We wish Sr Susan all the best with her new congregation at Harold Road and her future ministry.

As I am writing this, we have just held our summer Garden Party. It was a wonderful day, the sun shone, and we had music from the talented junior steel band led by Br Harry. The food was, as always, delicious. We were treated to a BBQ, along with other culinary delights in the form of cakes baked by some of our members. Sr Sonia and her team really do spoil us with the spreads they put on. It was a very well supported occasion, with a lot of the congregation there and people from the local area popping in. Sr Patricia's ever popular plant stall sold out within a short space of time, which is never surprising given the beautiful array of colours and plant varieties. Sr Rose and Sr Ivy had their Bric-a-Brac stall which had a big selection of items and proved to be popular. Last but not least, Br Michael created two games; 'Guess how many sweets in the jar' and, 'Find the treasure on the island'. These were both enjoyed by everyone and who knows, may become regular additions to our future Garden Party. Thank you to all who I have mentioned, and everyone else who supported the occasion, in whatever way you did. It was a huge success and has raised a lot of money for church funds.

Sr Claire Newman

University Road, Belfast

Sunday 16th June saw the culmination of a highly successful year for the Sunday School at University Road when the children and young people led us in worship. In a very lively and interactive service they read and acted out passages from scripture; gave a spirited rendition of 'I'm in the Lord's Army' with all the actions; sang and led with prayers.

As June 16th was also Father's Day the reflection from Sunday School leader Sr Sandra Biggart on the theme of Jesus the Superhero also highlighted the fathers, grandfathers and great grandfathers in our congregation who are Superheroes to their families, serving as wonderful role models for the Christian life.

The children also received their YPMA awards and prizes for attendance.

The Sunday School plays a prominent and vital part in the life of the University Road congregation, and we are blessed



© Sr Lynsey Cunningham

to have an enrolment of twenty children and young people ranging from toddlers to teenagers.

We are blessed in the Sunday School leadership team of Sr Sandra Biggart and Br Andy James who show enormous commitment week after week and make the lessons and events fun for all. Their work is much appreciated by the congregation as a whole.

Sr Carol Ackah

Ockbrook, Derbyshire

The Ockbrook in Bloom team again created a fantastic Well Dressing over the old well at the back of our church. Well dressing is a Derbyshire/Peak District tradition, thought to date back to Roman times, and involves creating artworks on wooden frames, filled with clay, and decorated in intricate designs using flower petals and other natural materials. The Well was blessed by Br Joachim Kreusel and was on show for over two weeks.

Overlapping with the Well Dressing was the second Ockbrook & Borrowash Scarecrow Festival. There were 58 scarecrows on display in public areas and private gardens and driveways. On the theme of The Olympics, these ranged from a horse and rider jumping over a hedge to swimmers and cyclists. Our church entries were a would-be rower on the church lawn, a Sport Climber climbing up the front of church, and an athlete warming up outside the Lecture Hall. We did not win any prizes, but we had fun making them!

Srs Julie & Rosie Hague



© Br Joachim Kreusel



© Sr Michèle Battelle



© Sr Julie Hague

THE FETTER LANE CONGREGATION & HISTORIAN IAN FOSTER PRESENT:

Chelsea Utopia 500

500TH ANNIVERSARY OF SIR THOMAS MORE'S
CHELSEA ESTATE 1524 - 2024



500 years ago, one of Chelsea's most illustrious residents chose Chelsea as his family home and his name is today a familiar sight in the area seen on buildings, churches and schools. In the early 16th century, Thomas More achieved considerable fame around Europe as the author of a fictional account of an island he called Utopia, published in 1516. By 1524, he had earned a knighthood along with various prestigious appointments as advisor to Henry VIII. He purchased 27 acres of land in Chelsea where he built a home and created his personal Utopia.

We will be exploring the story of More's *Chelsea Utopia* and the many people and events that have helped to shape this unique part of modern London over the past 500 years via a series of talks. A programme of free events is listed below so please join us this summer to learn more.

July 25: Screening of film - A Man For All Seasons
August 1: The Greatest House At Chelsey
August 8: A Place for Spirituality and Contemplation
August 15: Moravian Close - Past, Present & Future
August 22: What Is Utopia?



Location - Moravian Close
381 King's Road, Chelsea
SW10 0LP

All events - Thursday 6pm until 9pm

KING'S ROAD
to My Catwalk

For tickets and details go to -
moravianclosechelsea.com

Registered Charity No. 251211

NOTICES

Obituary

The family of Renee Somerville wish to announce her peaceful passing on 26th June at the grand age of 103. Renee was a regular and active member of Salem Moravian Church in Oldham until she moved to Blackpool twenty years ago. She read the Moravian Messenger each month and received comfort from the Daily watchwords in the Moravian Almanac.

FROM CHURCH HOUSE

Provincial Diary for August

29 July-2 Aug Summer Camp Bell Heath Centre
21-22 Provincial Board Meeting Church House

13 Manifestation of the of the Spirit at Herrnhut in 1727

19 Raksha Bandhan - Hindu

21 The beginning of the Moravian Missions in 1732

23 UNESCO International Day for Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition
(www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/ism/srd/ or <https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/18>)

Dates to remember!

Heritage Days

Bath Weston

Weston Free Church (Moravian) is celebrating Heritage Open Day on Saturday 7th September, from 12:00 to 4:00pm.

We are embracing this year's theme of Routes-Networks-Connections by partnering with the different community groups that use our Church and Hall, including fitness and well-being, charities, modelling, local history, and boy's and girls' associations. Activities and interests include stalls, crafts, entertainment, an audio-visual display, vintage vehicles, a tour of the facilities, and more.

Refreshments available.



FAIRFIELD MORAVIAN CHURCH, SETTLEMENT & MUSEUM, DROYLSDEN
Sunday 8 September 2024 1pm to 5pm
Location for Great British Railway Journeys, Peaky Blinders & the film Mrs Lowry & Son
Tours every half hour 1pm-4pm (booking preferred but not essential see HOD website for details)
Exhibition, Stalls and Light Refreshments available
Free Admission
(All parking in Fairfield High School off Fairfield Avenue M43 6ED)



www.heritageopendays.org.uk
@heritageopenday #HODs /heritageopendays @heritageopendays


Here

There

And Everywhere

Saturday 14th September

Fulneck Settlement

10.30am-4pm

Free entry

Come along and have a guided tour of the Settlement

Visit the exhibition in church and the museum

Childrens' Activity

Refreshments

For a small fee you can also visit the Vintage Car Show

www.fulneck.org.uk postcode LS28 8NT



Fetter Lane - Open House London 2024

After marking the 500th anniversary of Sir Thomas More's residence in what is now known as Moravian Close, the Fetter Lane congregation will again take part in Open House weekend. This year it takes place on Saturday and Sunday, 14th and 15th September from 1pm to 5pm. As usual, we will introduce near neighbours and visitors from farther afield to the long and varied history of the site, from Tudor times to its place in the artistic life of Chelsea via the Gillicks, to the reinvigoration of the congregation thanks to the Windrush arrivals, and much in between.

All of this information and more can be found in a free printed booklet written by Sr Naomi Hancock. Visitors will learn about the rich history of the site, its importance as a site of biodiversity and the significance of its long Moravian heritage, past and present.

We will have a quiz sheet for children and refreshments, as well as a pleasant place to rest and reflect.

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